

# REASONS

FOR ABSTAINING FROM

West-India Rum & Sugar,

Suited to the Understandings

OF THE

COMMON PEOPLE.

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By JOHN VALTON.

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*David would not drink thereof, but said, Be it far from me, O Lord, that I should do this! Is not this the blood of the men that went in jeopardy of their lives! Therefore he would not drink it.*

2 Sam. xxiii. 15—17.

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## REASONS, &c.

A Small pamphlet has been spread over *England*, to dissuade the people from the use of Rum and Sugar, with an intention to put a stop to that cruel and unnatural traffick, called the Slave-Trade. It is well written, and has hitherto been very useful; for by its means, many thousands of persons (and probably of families) have given up the use of these commodities. But if it had been written in a plainer stile, its good effects would be more extensive: because the force of its arguments would be more easily discerned, and felt, by people of little education, who are as capable of humanity, as the most learned. For the better information of such people, the following pages are written; in which is contained, a short, and plain account, First, Of the manner, in which Slaves are procured on the Coast of *Africa*. Secondly, Of their treatment in the ships, while on their passage from thence to the *West-Indies*. Thirdly, Of the barbarities they undergo in their

Harry Millican

state of Slavery, from those merciless men, their Owners and Drivers. And let the Reader be assured, that nothing shall be delivered, but what has been, or can be supported, by unquestionable authority.

FIRST, Let us consider the manner, in which Slaves are procured, on the Coast of *Africa*.—These poor creatures are forced away from their own native country, by the most unjust and cruel means. Villages are set at variance by the Traders, and prisoners on both sides are purchased for Slaves. Kings are stirred up to war, and furnished with arms to procure them for the Traders. Soldiers are sent to villages by night, to set the houses on fire, whilst the poor inhabitants are asleep. The terrified people escaping from their houses, are seized by the surrounding soldiers, and bound like criminals. Many are decoyed, and others that are young, are stolen from their parents. These are some of the means used to procure Slaves.

II. Let us consider their treatment after they are brought on board the vessels. They are immediately put in irons, and chained two and two together, by the hands and feet; and they remain in this painful situation, 'till they arrive at the *West-Indies*. They are so closely stowed together under deck, that they can scarce turn themselves; neither

neither have they room to sit upright ; and they are almost suffocated with the stench of the foul air : sometimes crying out in their own language, “ We be dying, we be dying.” A gentleman has declared upon oath before the Committee of the House of Commons, that they have not so much room in length and breadth as a man in his coffin. Frequently those are found dead in the morning, who were well over night ; and the floors of the ship have appeared like a slaughter-house from the blood and filth, that have come from the bodies of the sick and of the dead. A surgeon of one of the slave-ships tells us, that in one voyage they lost one hundred and eighty negroes out of four hundred and ninety. Another says, They lost one hundred and thirty two out of two hundred and fifty. During their voyage they are overwhelmed with distress and sorrow of mind, on account of their being separated from all that is dear unto them ; and they are frequently heard in the night, making a dismal howling noise. Their miseries are so great, that some have leaped into the sea ; some hanged themselves ; and others refused food, till they have died with hunger : each preferring death, before such a life. They lie upon the bare boards sick or well, and through the constant rolling of the ship, their flesh is rubbed off from their bones. In the morning for the benefit of their health, they are brought upon

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deck,



deck, and made to jump (which the friends of the trade call dancing) with their chains on, while a man stands over them, with a cat-of-nine-tails, to whip them to this exercise; 'till their flesh becomes raw, through their chains and stripes.

III. Let us consider the barbarities they undergo in their state of Slavery. Those that outlive these cruelties, and arrive at the Islands, are sold by public auction, or by lots; and then husbands and wives, parents and children, brothers and sisters, relations and friends, are separated as sheep and lambs by the Butcher. The buyers consider them as a set of beings, lower than themselves, whom they have a right to use in what manner they please. Their general treatment is very severe; even worse than that of beasts. They are called into the field to work, at the rising of the sun, and continue till sun-set. After this, they are obliged to range about, to pick grass for the cattle, during their own vacant hours, and are frequently punished for not procuring the quantity required, although it be almost impossible. If they are not in the field punctually at the stated times, they are severely corrected; and as they perform their work in rows, if the weak do not keep up with the strong, they are so cruelly whipped, that many are hurried into the grave. Some poor women with child, have been obliged to work till within a few hours of their delivery;

livery ; and have received thirty-nine lashes, while in that state. Hard work and cruel usage have caused many to miscarry, and one woman was delivered on the very spot. As to their food, General *Tottenham* says, that at *Barbadoes*, where they have the best allowance, each Slave had no more than a pint of grain for twenty-four hours, and sometimes half a stinking herring. This provision being so scanty, they have been known to eat the putrifying carcases of animals, to support their lives. As to their cloathing, habitation and furniture, in these things they are miserably deficient. Their bodies are almost naked, and most of them lie upon the ground, or on boards. From the above-mentioned severities, practised upon these poor sufferers, let us go on to consider the grievous tortures to which they are frequently obliged to submit. One punishment is that of whipping. The cow-skin whip is so dreadful an instrument in the hands of the drivers, that by means of it, they can cut the skin off a horse's back ; and every blow laid upon a poor Slave, takes away a piece of his flesh, insomuch that you may lay your whole finger in the wounds. Some of their whips are such as our Carters use. Sometimes these poor creatures are tied up by the hands, and lifted off the ground, with half a hundred weight fixed to their feet ; and in this situation they are flogged with the Cow-skin whip ;



whip ; and afterwards with Ebony bushes, which are more prickly than thorns, in order to let out the foul blood. Some are whipped round the Town, or made to stand in some public place, women as well as men. Some have received a hundred stripes ; some one hundred and fifty, or more, till all the skin has been taken off, from the hams to the small of the back, and their bodies appear as raw flesh and blood ; and afterwards they are washed with salt and pickle, which is a punishment more severe than the whipping. This cruel usage has made many run away into the woods, and cut their own throats. Some have mortified after flogging, bred worms and died. One poor woman, for breaking a plate, was nailed by the ear to a post. In the morning she was gone, having forced the head of the nail through her ear. She was soon found, and brought back ; and her two ears were cut off, close to her head, by the Monster her Master. Some have had their teeth punched out, nostrils slit, and hands cut off. One had his leg mashed to pieces, and afterwards cut off to save his life. Some have been run through the body, shot through the head, or thrown into the boiling cane-juice. Women have been obliged by their cruel Mistresses, to work with a Thumb-screw on, or kneeling with their naked knees upon small pebble-stones. Hot scalding wax has been dropped



upon them after flogging. These cruelties are inflicted for the most trifling offences, through the rage or wantonness of the Owner or Driver; and there have been instances of those who for greater crimes, have been gibbeted alive or burnt to death. \* Some more dreadful acts of cruelty acknowledged before the Committee of the House of Commons, have been concealed, as too shocking to relate. When these poor abused Slaves are worn out, or become incapable of working, they are turned off, and generally left to perish by hunger and pain. These miserable Creatures have no redress: they are mangled and murdered at pleasure, and scarcely ever any account is taken of such barbarities. But does not the Most High regard? Will not the Judge of all the earth do right? Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord? O yes! The Lord is at hand; the Judge is at the door! The avenger of blood is near!

“ If God, the righteous, whom he loves,  
For trial does correct;

What

\* A Writer tells us of a *Madagascar* Slave on an estate in the *Dutch* settlement, at the Cape, who was sentenced to be roasted alive. He was chained to a post, and a large fire was kindled round him. In his agony, he ran round and round the post, but without complaint or groan: till at length, being almost roasted, he dropped down, crying out, “O God, my Father!” and so on after expired.

What must the sons of violence,  
Whom he abhors, expect?

“Snakes, fire, and brimstone on their heads  
Shall in one tempest shew’r:  
This dreadful mixture his revenge  
Into their cup shall pour. Psa. xi. 5, 6.

And now, Reader, when you reflect that the Rum and Sugar which you use, are the produce of such sharp sufferings of your poor fellow-mortals; shall they any longer be sweet to your taste: or not, rather, be bitter as gall and wormwood! Is not the ground that produces these things, moistened with the tears, and sweat, and blood of your oppressed brethren? Is not the very Sugar dyed, as it were, in the purple stream? With what devotion can you stand up before God, to ask a blessing upon, or return thanks for any meal, if it contains any of these things which cost the blood of their lives? Can you taste these gifts with joy, which are defiled with human gore? Surely you will not continue a practice, which contributes to support such cruelties; makes you the chief promoter of their sufferings, and will, without repentance, hasten down the vengeance of heaven. Hitherto we have been ignorant of the various enormities of the slave-trade, and might have pleaded that ignorance as our excuse. But, now that our eyes are open, let us beware of the



the curse of God ! O let us all instantly give up the use of these two articles ; and then this cruel, this unjust and diabolical trade must cease, and we shall no more be accessary to the misery and murder of our dear Fellow-Creatures !

“ Lord, hear the sighing pris’ners moan,  
Thy saving pow’r extend ;  
Preserve the wretches doom’d to die  
From that untimely end.

“ So we thy people and thy flock  
Shall ever praise thy name ;  
And with glad hearts, our grateful thanks  
From age to age proclaim.”

Pfalm lxxix. 11. 13.

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